



#1

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STAR WARS

DARK EMPIRE



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BOOK 1: THE DESTINY OF A JEDI

Following the deaths of Darth Vader and the Emperor and the destruction of the second Death Star, the Rebel Alliance proclaimed a New Republic over three-fourths of the Galaxy. But without the thousands of Jedi Knights who formed the backbone of the Old Republic, the new confederation was a precarious one.

Long years of struggle ensued, during which the Imperials regained strength, pushing back the Alliance until the majority of worlds, including the vital Imperial System, fell once again under Imperial control.

Then, without warning, civil war erupted, as factions within the Imperial Navy battled the former Emperor's ruling circle for control of the Empire.

The Rebels seized the opportunity to sow confusion among the feuding Imperials, using captured Star Destroyers to conduct hit-and-run sorties into the war zones.

One such raid, over the raging Imperial City battleground, ended in disaster: the Alliance Star Destroyer Liberator, commanded by Luke Skywalker and Lando Calrissian, crashed on the planet's surface. Only Luke's skillful use of the ship's deflector shields and anti-grav braking system prevented all aboard from being killed.

As our story opens, Princess Leia Organa and her husband Han Solo, together with the Wookiee Chewbacca and the protocol droid C-3PO, are on a daring mission to rescue their fallen comrades.



HAN-- THE NAVICOMPUTER
JUST REPORTED EXTREME
TURBULENCE AT OUR REENTRY
COORDINATES.

THAT'LL BE
BATTLE DEBRIS,
LEIA! THE WHOLE
IMPERIAL SECTOR
IS LITTERED
WITH IT!

WARN THE OTHER
SHIPS, CHEWIE!...AND
PREPARE TO EXIT
HYPERSPACE!



SIR, THE ODDS
OF COLLISION WITH
THE SPACE DEBRIS ARE
3,722 TO ONE ... IF I
MAY SUGGEST--

CHEWIE! WATCH
YOUR THRUSTERS!

...AND REMIND ME TO
CROSSWIRE GOLDENROD'S
VOICE SYNTHESIZER WHEN
WE GET BACK TO BASE!



NRAWWUNNN!

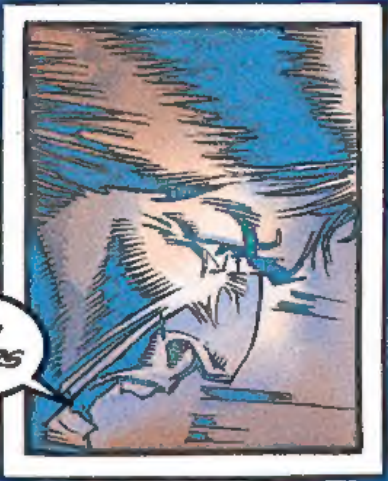
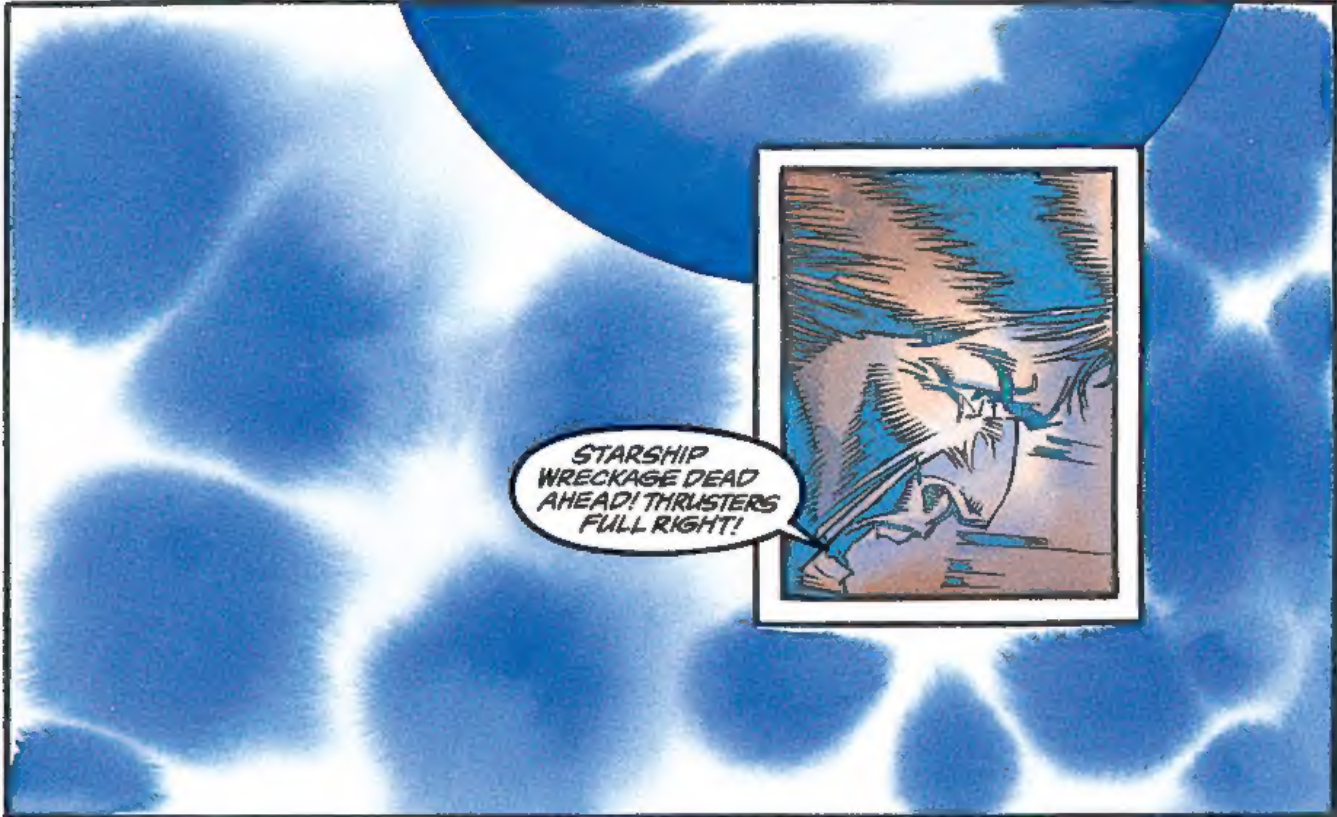


BUT, SIR,
IF I MAY SAY
SO--



THREEPIO,
SIT DOWN!

FIVE
SECONDS TO
REENTRY!



STARSHIP
WRECKAGE DEAD
AHEAD! THRUSTERS
FULL RIGHT!

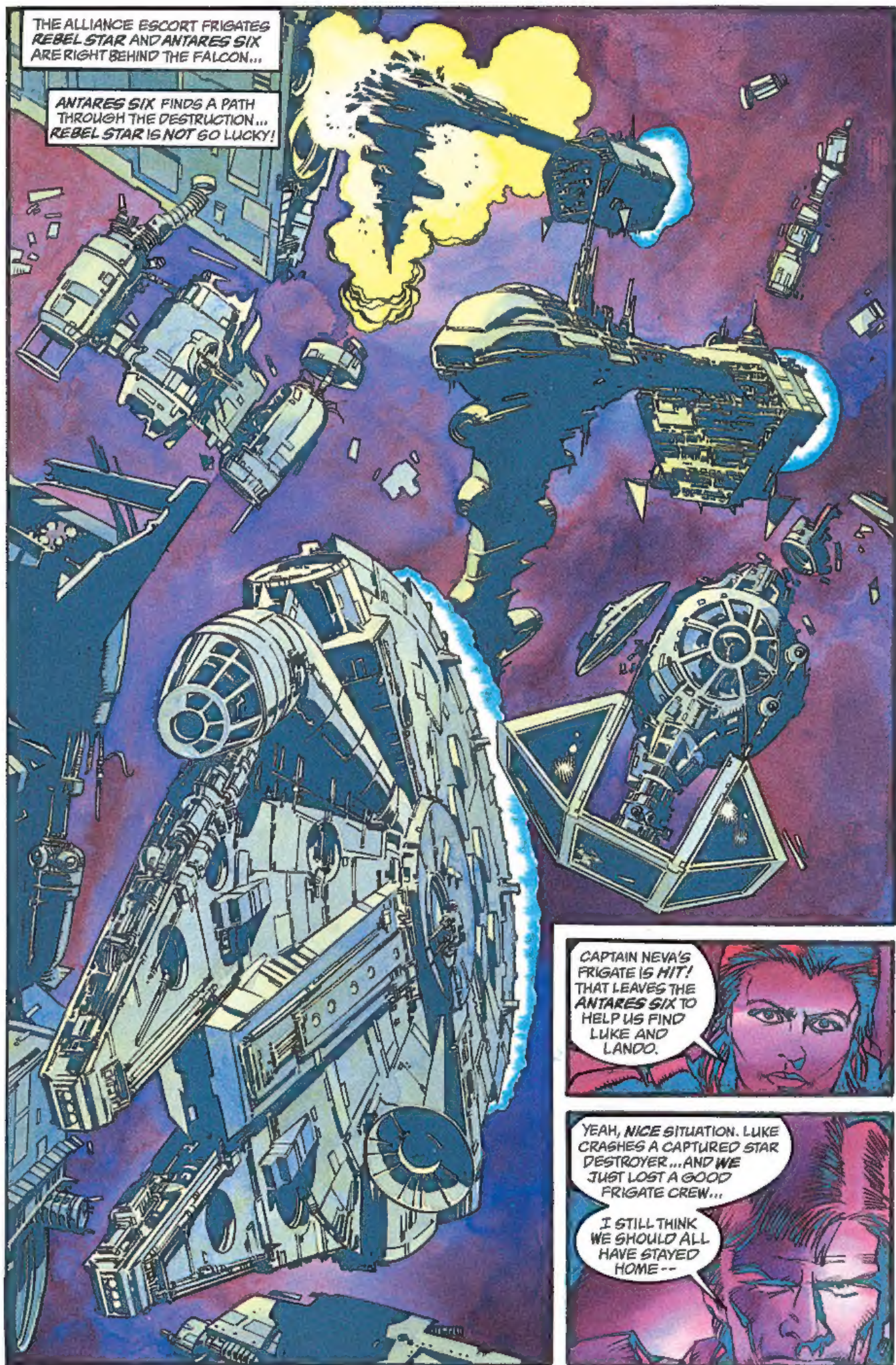
THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON*,
RETROFITTED WITH THE LATEST
LIGHTSPEED ION ENGINES, BURSTS
OUT OF HYPERSPACE AMIDST THE
WRECKAGE OF A GREAT SPACE
BATTLE!

NNNWARRAR!



THE ALLIANCE ESCORT FRIGATES
REBEL STAR AND ANTARES SIX
ARE RIGHT BEHIND THE FALCON...

ANTARES SIX FINDS A PATH
THROUGH THE DESTRUCTION...
REBEL STAR IS NOT SO LUCKY!



CAPTAIN NEVA'S
FRIGATE IS HIT!
THAT LEAVES THE
ANTARES SIX TO
HELP US FIND
LUKE AND
LANDO.

YEAH, NICE SITUATION. LUKE
CRASHES A CAPTURED STAR
DESTROYER...AND WE
JUST LOST A GOOD
FRIGATE CREW...

I STILL THINK
WE SHOULD ALL
HAVE STAYED
HOME--



--BESIDES, LUKE
AND LANDO DON'T NEED
US! IF I KNOW THOSE GUYS,
RIGHT ABOUT NOW THEY'VE
GOT THE IMPERIALS DOIN'
THE GAMORREAN
TWO-STEP!



BUT, HAN-- WE
LOST THEIR SIGNAL!
THE DISTRESS BEACON
BROKE CONTACT AT
ZERO ALTITUDE!

HNAWWRUUNNH!

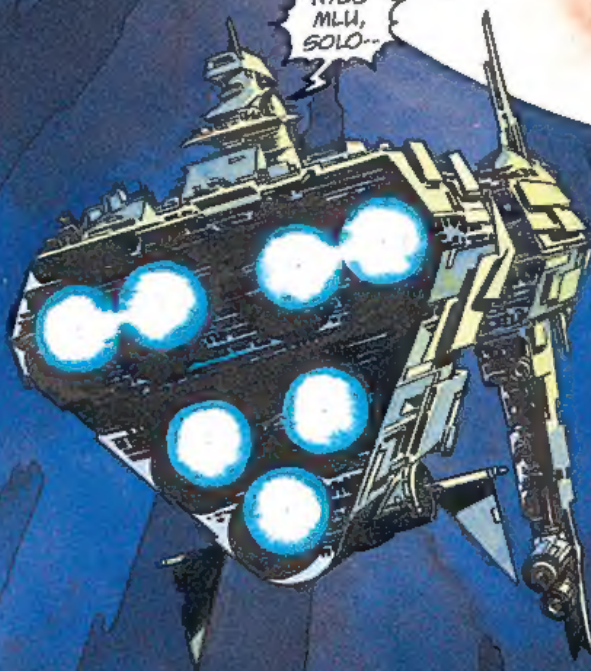


YEAH, CHEWIE...
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M SORRY
I SHOT OFF MY BIG
MOUTH.

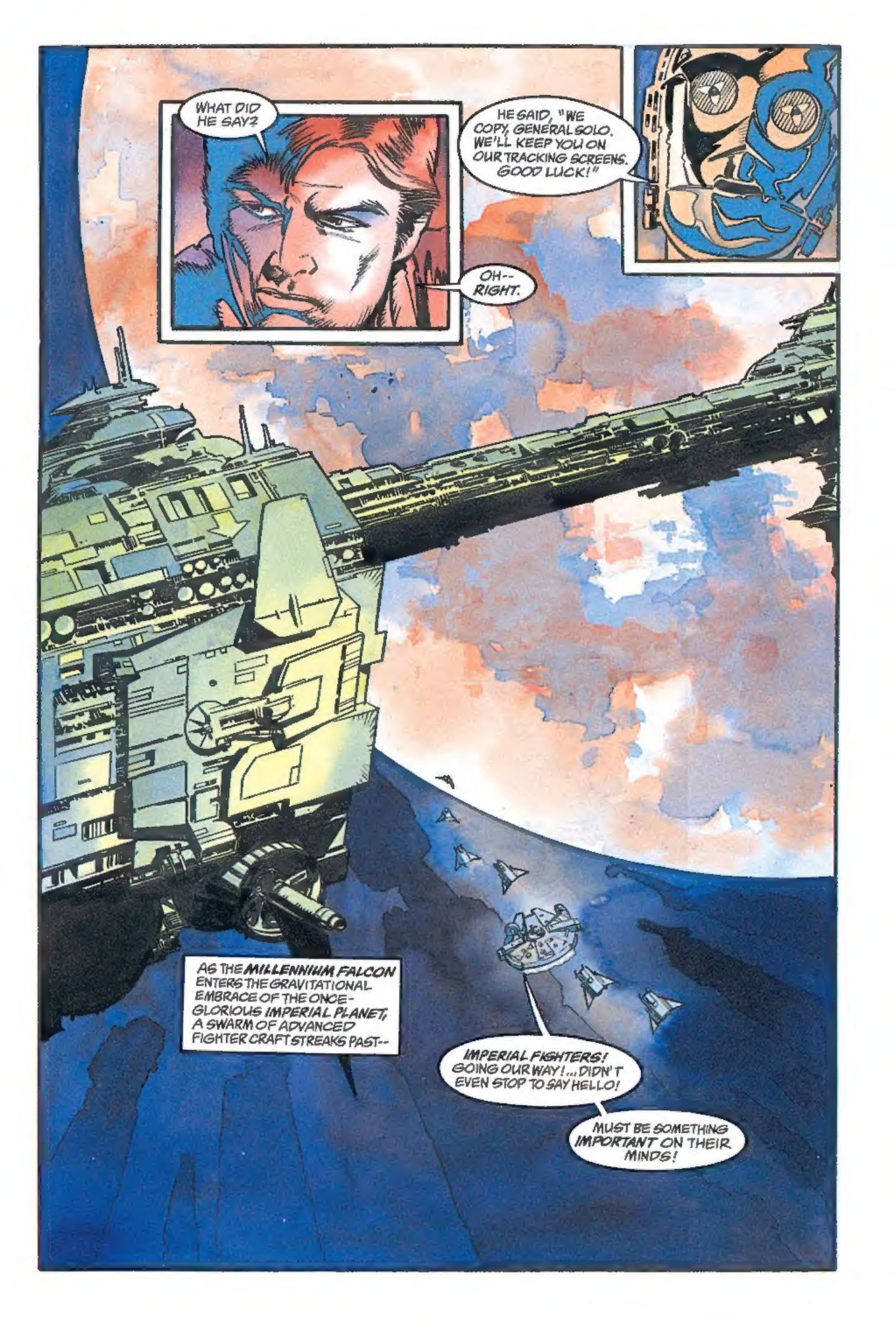
SOLO TO ANTARES SIX...
HOLD DOCKING ORBIT...WE'RE
GOING DOWN TO LOOK FOR
COMMANDER SKYWALKER
AND GENERAL CALRISSIAN!



NYEB
MLU,
SOLO--



--TSUN KNETTO
EIHORA NIWDOOS,
BNEF NLE!



WHAT DID HE SAY?

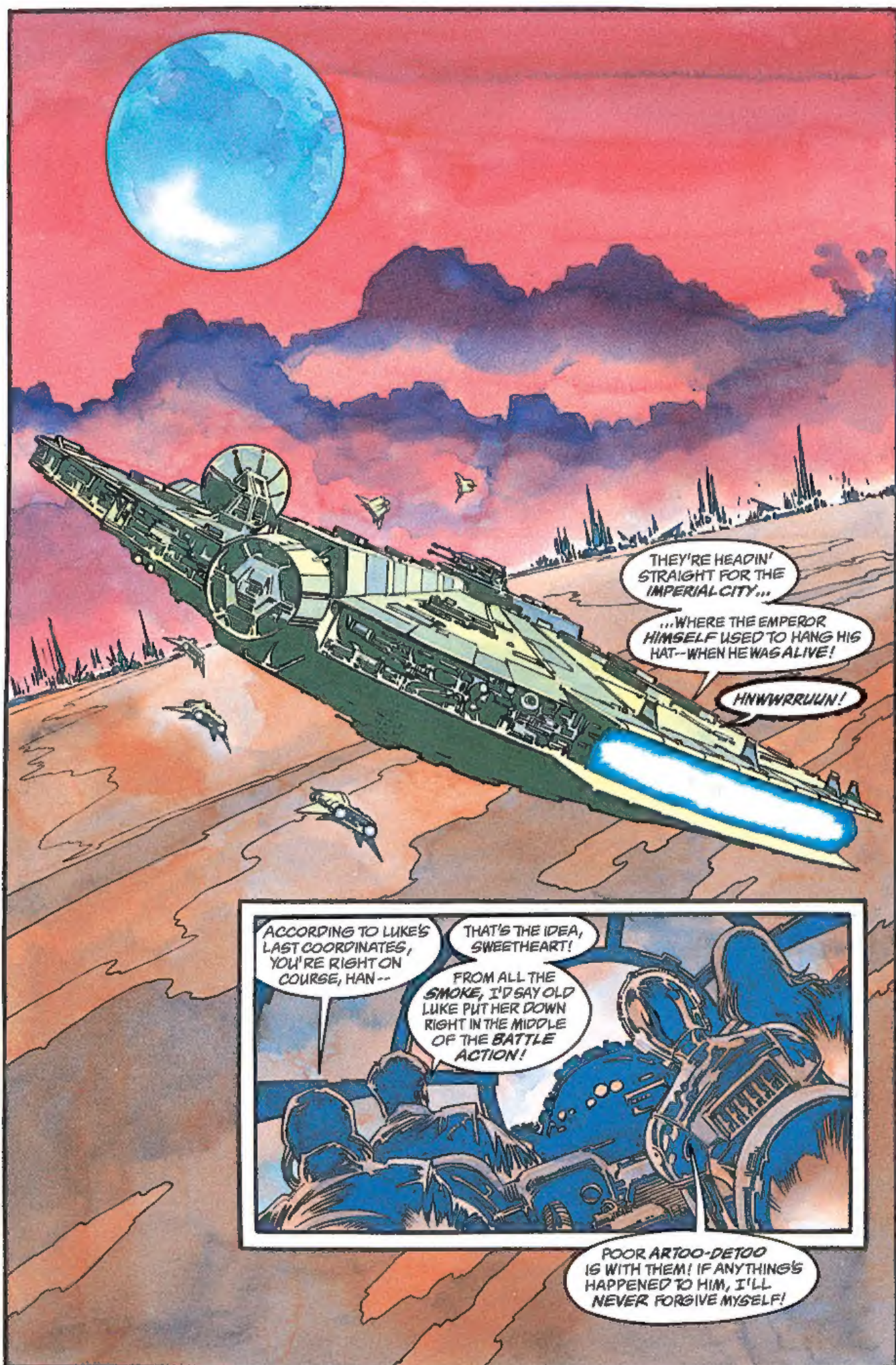
HE SAID, "WE COPY, GENERAL SOLO. WE'LL KEEP YOU ON OUR TRACKING SCREENS. GOOD LUCK!"

OH--
RIGHT.

AS THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON** ENTERS THE GRAVITATIONAL EMBRACE OF THE ONCE-GLORIOUS IMPERIAL PLANET, A SWARM OF ADVANCED FIGHTER CRAFT STREAKS PAST--

IMPERIAL FIGHTERS!
GOING OUR WAY! ...DIDN'T
EVEN STOP TO SAY HELLO!

MUST BE SOMETHING
IMPORTANT ON THEIR
MINDS!



THEY'RE HEADIN'
STRAIGHT FOR THE
IMPERIAL CITY...

...WHERE THE EMPEROR
HIMSELF USED TO HANG HIS
HAT--WHEN HE WAS ALIVE!

HNWRRUUN!

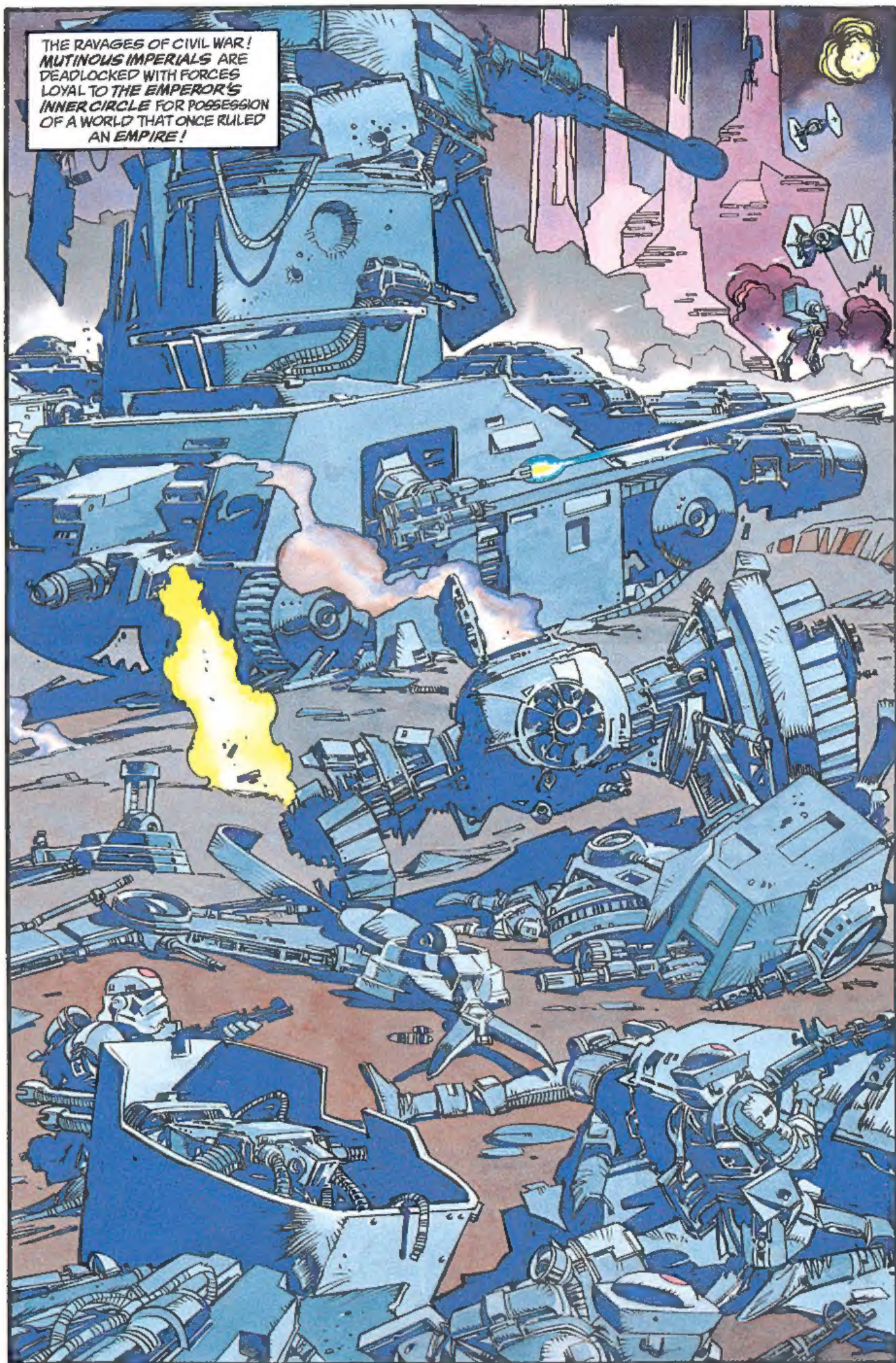
ACCORDING TO LUKE'S
LAST COORDINATES,
YOU'RE RIGHT ON
COURSE, HAN--

THAT'S THE IDEA,
SWEETHEART!

FROM ALL THE
SMOKE, I'D SAY OLD
LUKE PUT HER DOWN
RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE
OF THE BATTLE
ACTION!

POOR ARTOO-DETOO
IS WITH THEM! IF ANYTHING'S
HAPPENED TO HIM, I'LL
NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF!

THE RAVAGES OF CIVIL WAR!
MUTINOUS IMPERIALS ARE
DEADLOCKED WITH FORCES
LOYAL TO THE EMPEROR'S
INNER CIRCLE FOR POSSESSION
OF A WORLD THAT ONCE RULED
AN EMPIRE!

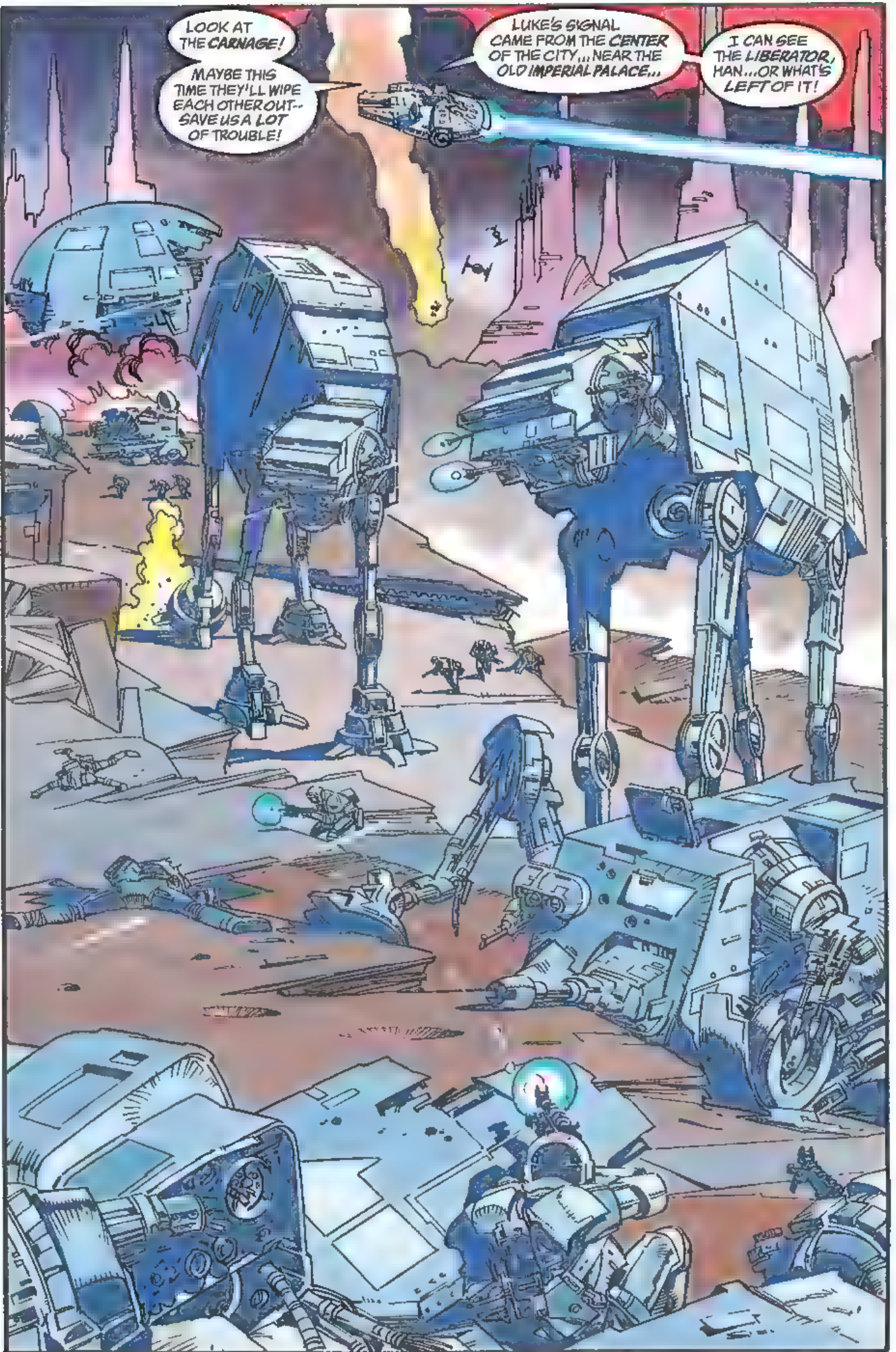


LOOK AT
THE CARNAGE!

MAYBE THIS
TIME THEY'LL WIPE
EACH OTHER OUT--
SAVE US A LOT
OF TROUBLE!

LUKE'S SIGNAL
CAME FROM THE CENTER
OF THE CITY... NEAR THE
OLD IMPERIAL PALACE...

I CAN SEE
THE LIBERATOR,
HAN... OR WHAT'S
LEFT OF IT!



SOLO SKILLFULLY PILOTS THE FALCON THROUGH THE CHAOS OF BATTLE, PRESSING ON TO THE SPOT WHERE HIS FRIENDS ARE FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES--

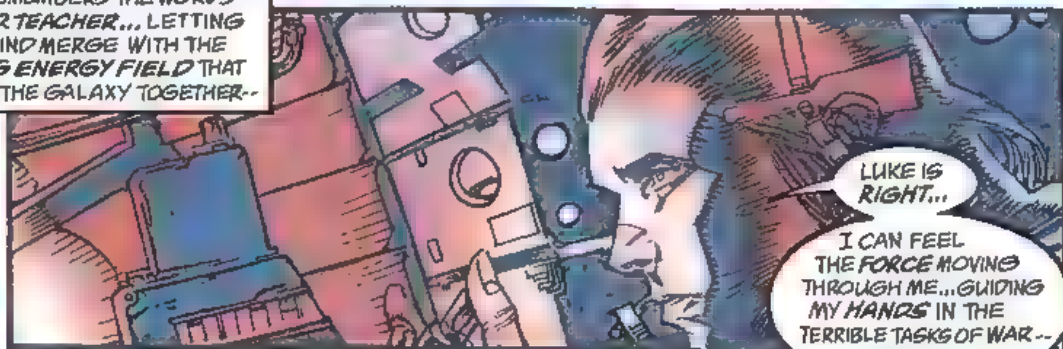
IMPERIAL WALKERS GOT 'EM PINNED DOWN!

TAKE THE HELM, CHEWIE--!

--YOU'RE ABOUT TO WATCH THE GREATEST HUSBAND-AND-WIFE GUNNER TEAM IN THE GALAXY!

I HOPE SO... THIS IS ONLY THE SECOND TIME I'VE EVER HAD TO USE ONE OF THESE THINGS...

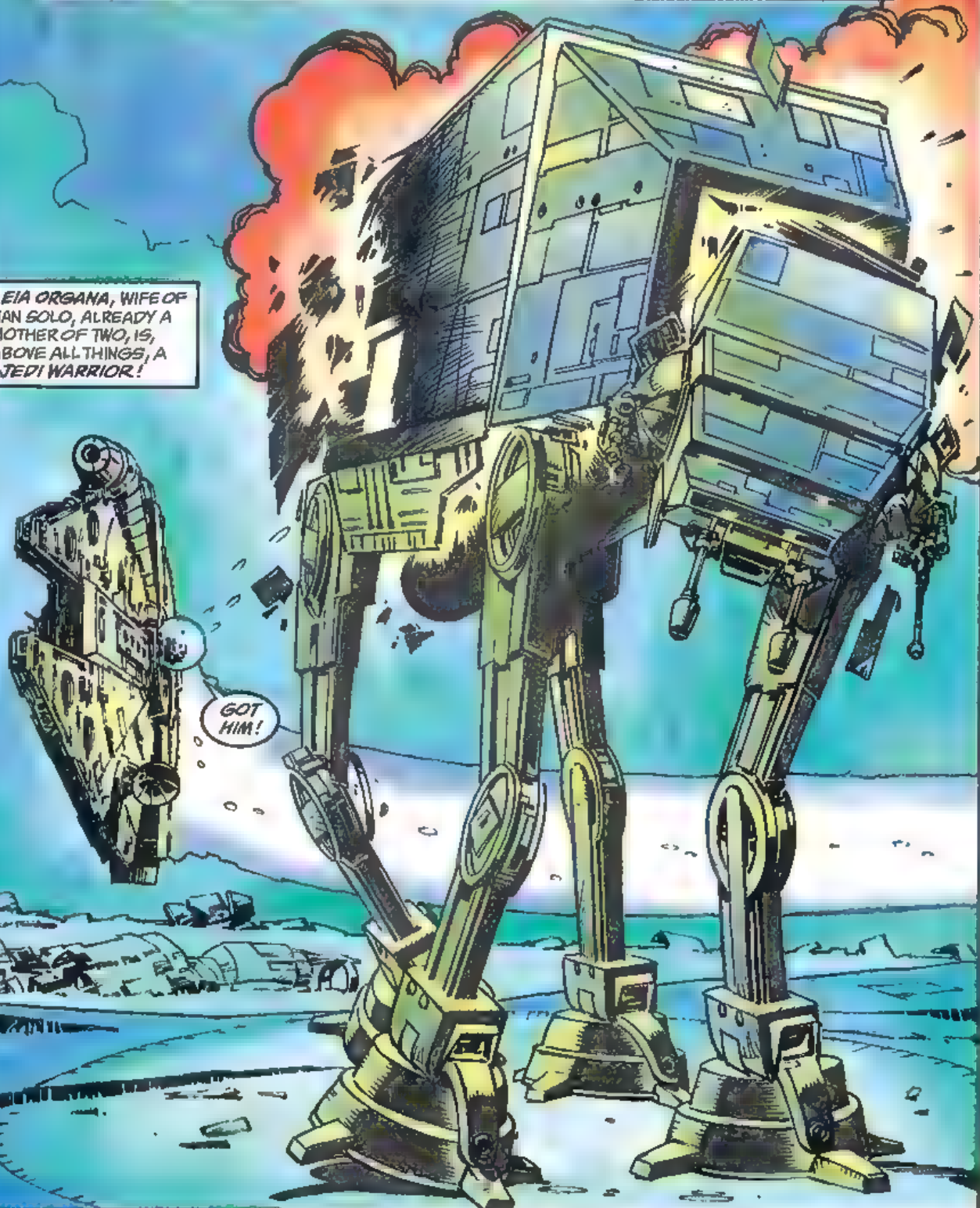
AS LEIA GRIPS THE CONTROLS OF THE BLASTER CANNON, SHE REMEMBERS THE WORDS OF HER TEACHER... LETTING HER MIND MERGE WITH THE LIVING ENERGY FIELD THAT BINDS THE GALAXY TOGETHER--



LUKE IS RIGHT...

I CAN FEEL THE FORCE MOVING THROUGH ME... GUIDING MY HANDS IN THE TERRIBLE TASKS OF WAR--

LEIA ORGANA, WIFE OF HAN SOLO, ALREADY A MOTHER OF TWO, IS, ABOVE ALL THINGS, A JEDI WARRIOR!



GOT HIM!

LANDO CALRISSIAN, WEDGE ANTILLES, AND THE REBELS WHO MANNED THE CAPTURED STAR DESTROYER RAISE A CHEER AT THE WELCOME SIGHT OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON.



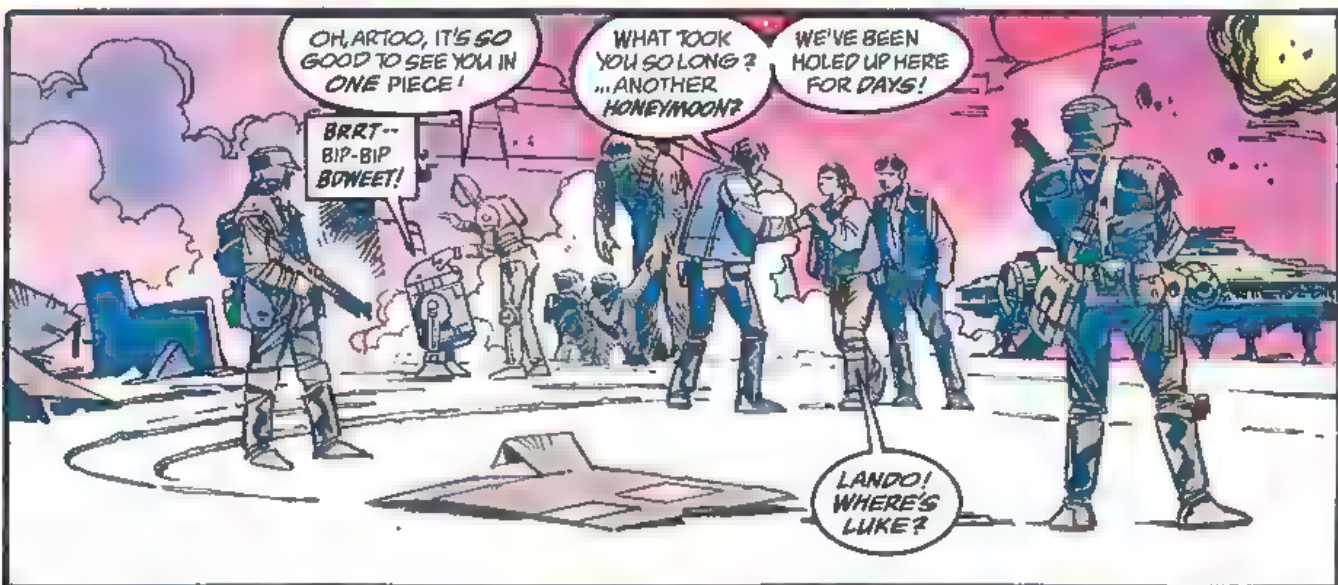
OH, ARTOO, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU IN ONE PIECE!

WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG? ...ANOTHER HONEYMOON?

WE'VE BEEN HOLED UP HERE FOR DAYS!

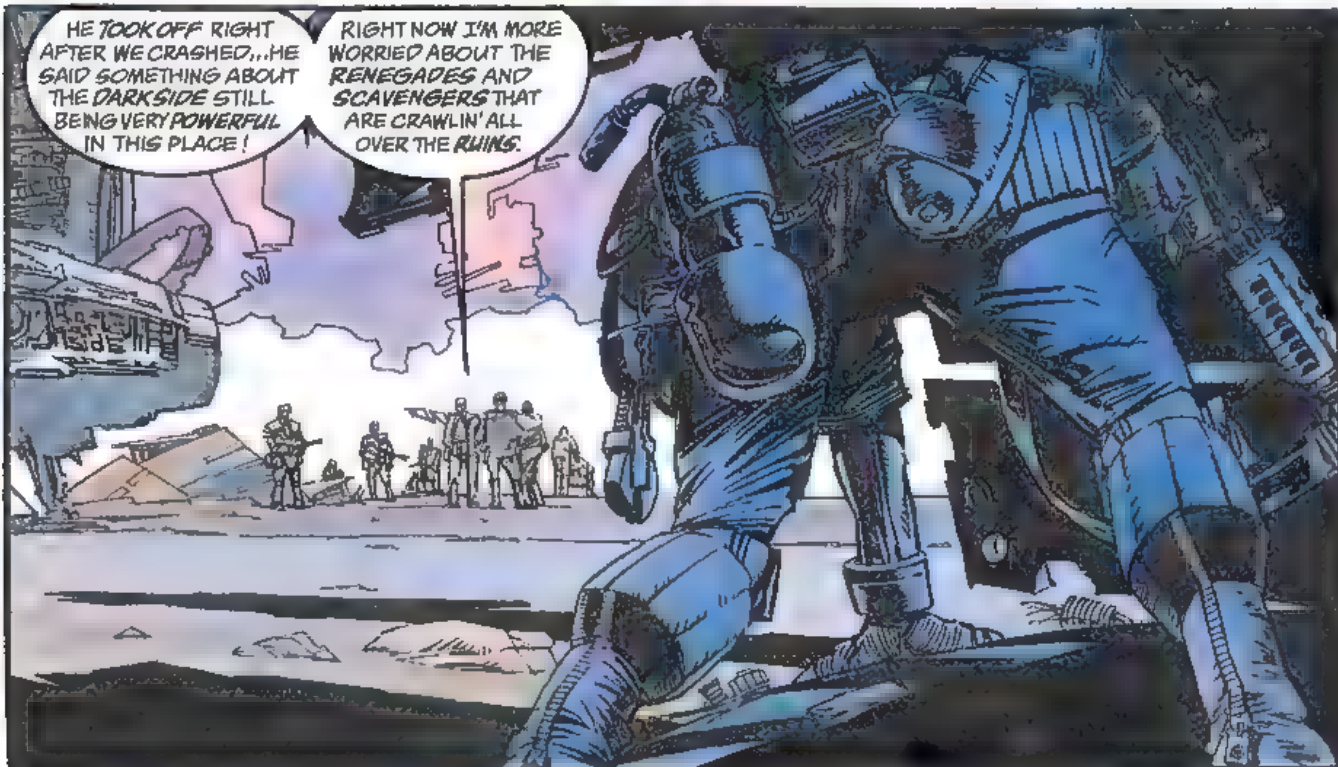
BRRT--
BIP-BIP
BOWWEET!

LANDO!
WHERE'S LUKE?



HE TOOK OFF RIGHT AFTER WE CRASHED... HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT THE DARKSIDE STILL BEING VERY POWERFUL IN THIS PLACE!

RIGHT NOW I'M MORE WORRIED ABOUT THE RENEGADES AND SCAVENGERS THAT ARE CRAWLIN' ALL OVER THE RUINS.

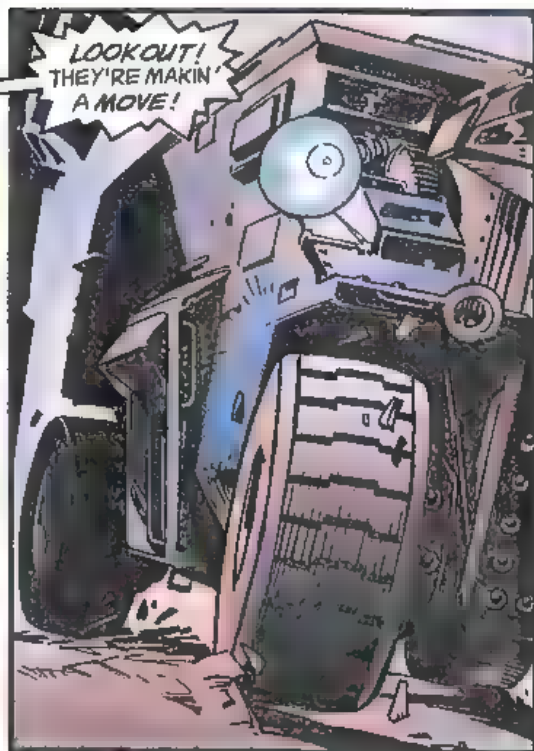




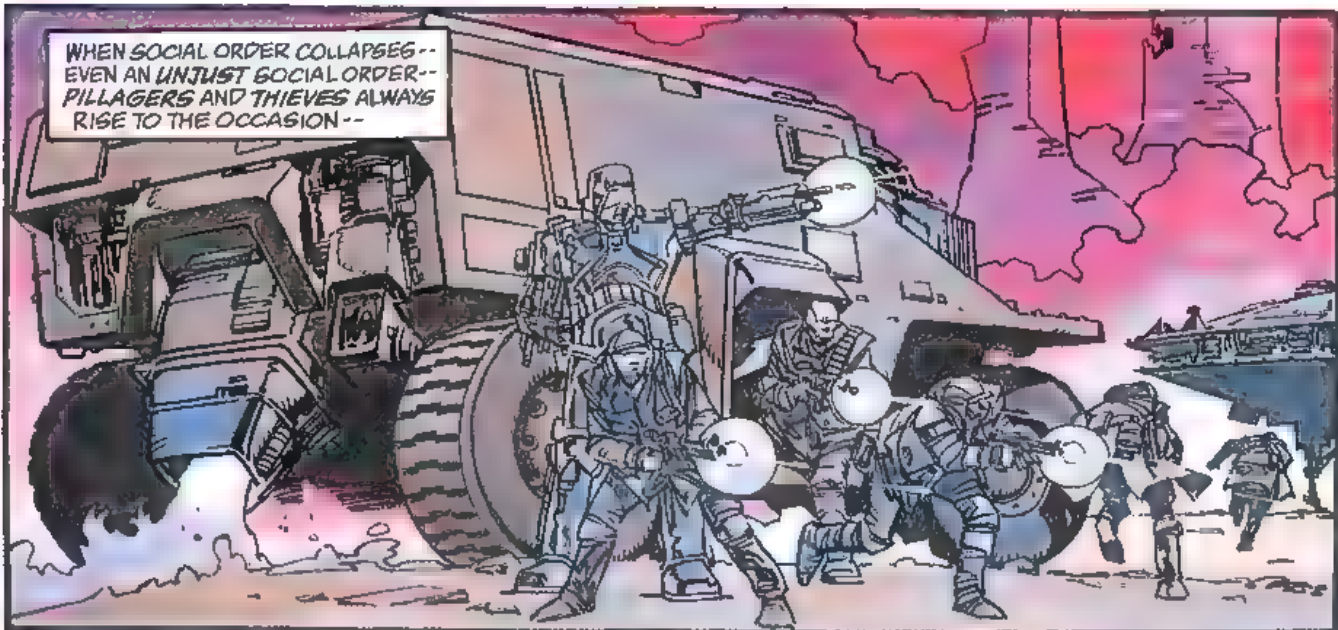
EVERY JUNK TRADER IN THE GALAXY HAS BEEN DRAWN TO THE BATTLEZONE... LIKE FLIES TO A FEAST!



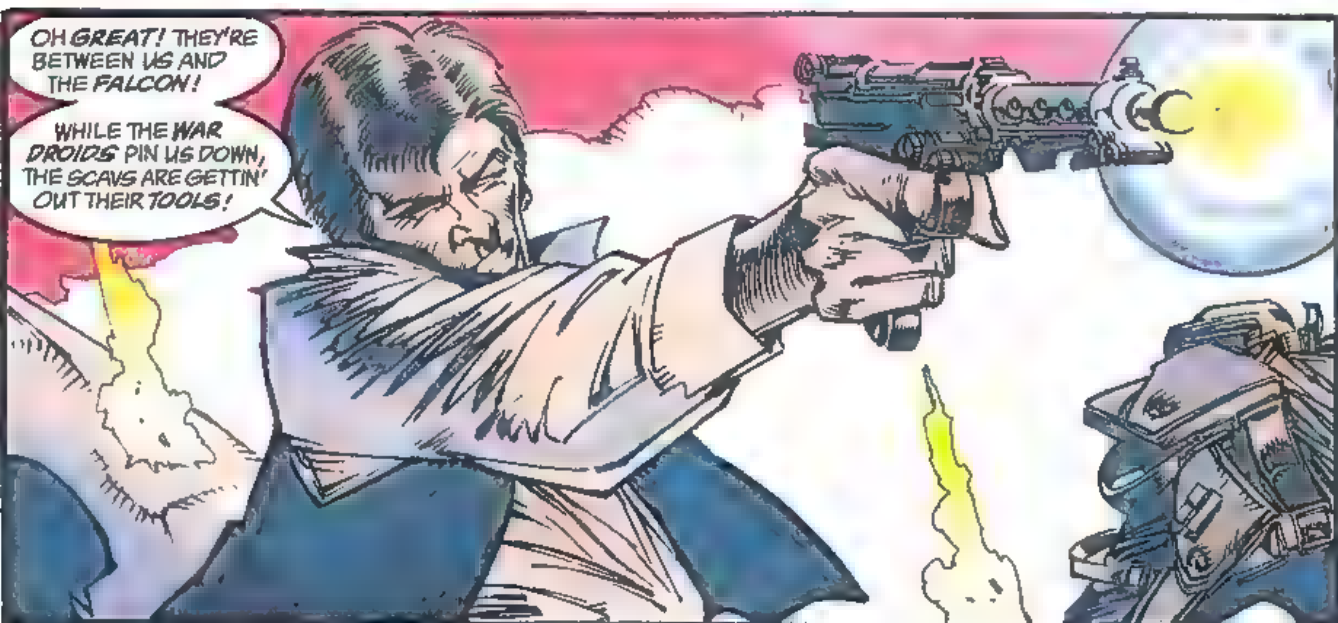
THIS BUNCH IS USING HOT-WIRED WEAPONS DROIDS... THEY'VE CREATED THEIR OWN LITTLE ARMY!



LOOK OUT! THEY'RE MAKIN' A MOVE!

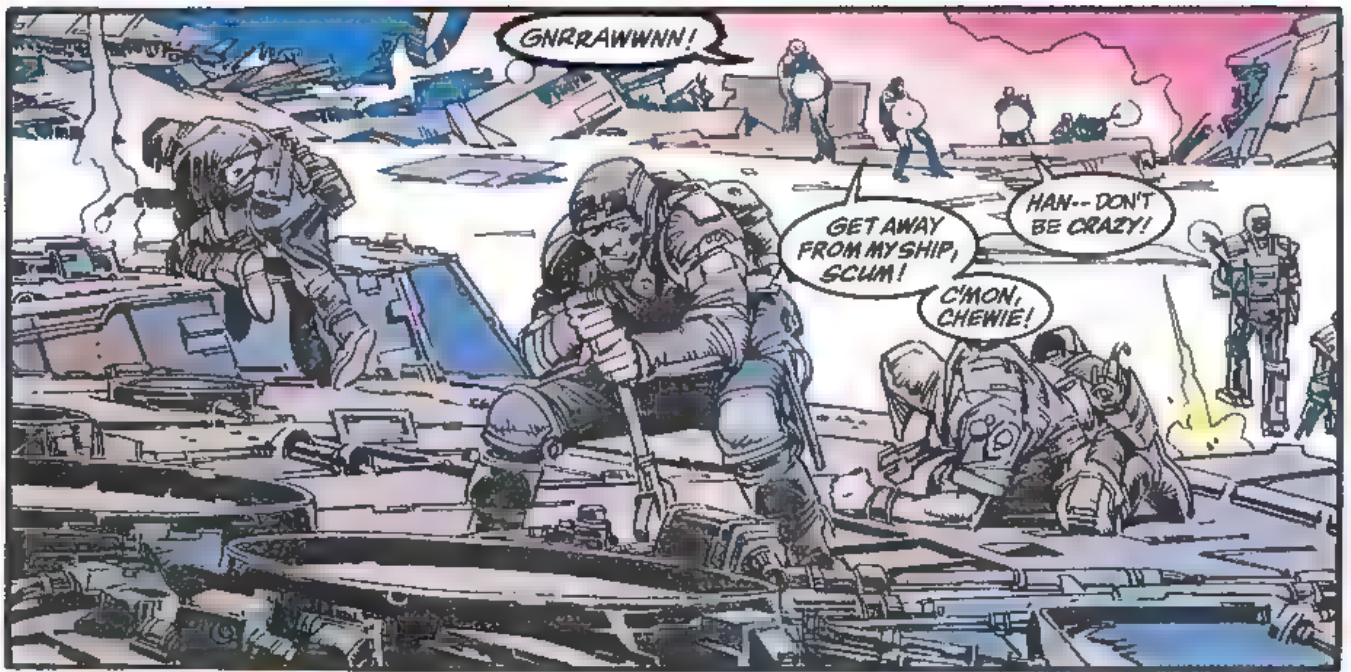


WHEN SOCIAL ORDER COLLAPSES-- EVEN AN UNJUST SOCIAL ORDER-- PILLAGERS AND THIEVES ALWAYS RISE TO THE OCCASION--



OH GREAT! THEY'RE BETWEEN US AND THE FALCON!

WHILE THE WAR DROIDS PIN US DOWN, THE SCAVS ARE GETTIN' OUT THEIR TOOLS!



GNRRAWNN!

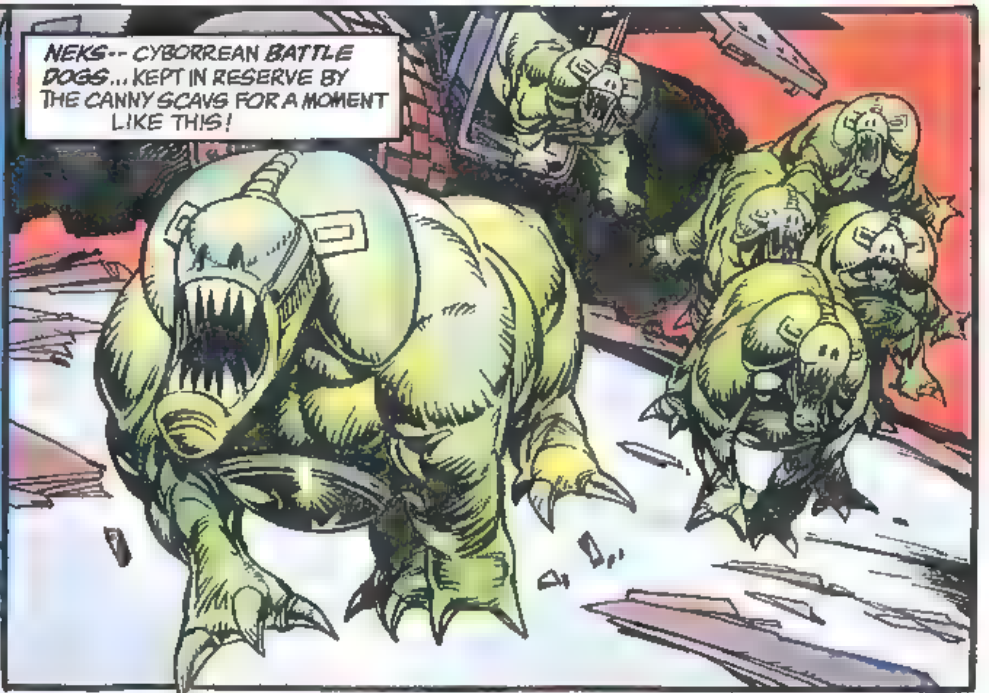
GET AWAY FROM MY SHIP, SCUM!

HAN-- DON'T BE CRAZY!

C'MON, CHEWIE!

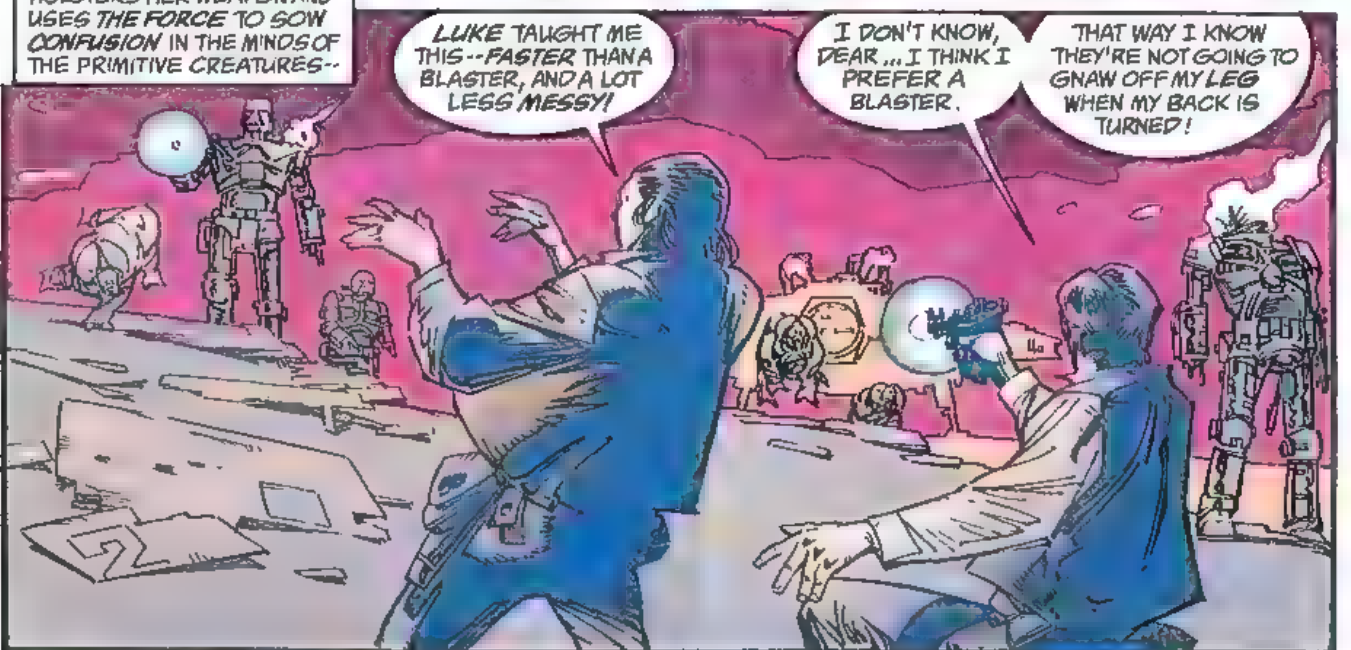


WATCH IT, HAN-- THEY'RE RELEASING A PACK OF NEKS!



NEKS-- CYBORREAN BATTLE DOGS... KEPT IN RESERVE BY THE CANNY SCAVS FOR A MOMENT LIKE THIS!

AS HAN'S CHARGE IS HALTED BY THE VICIOUS NEKS, LEIA HOLSTERS HER WEAPON AND USES THE FORCE TO SOW CONFUSION IN THE MINDS OF THE PRIMITIVE CREATURES--



LUKE TAUGHT ME THIS-- FASTER THAN A BLASTER, AND A LOT LESS MESSY!

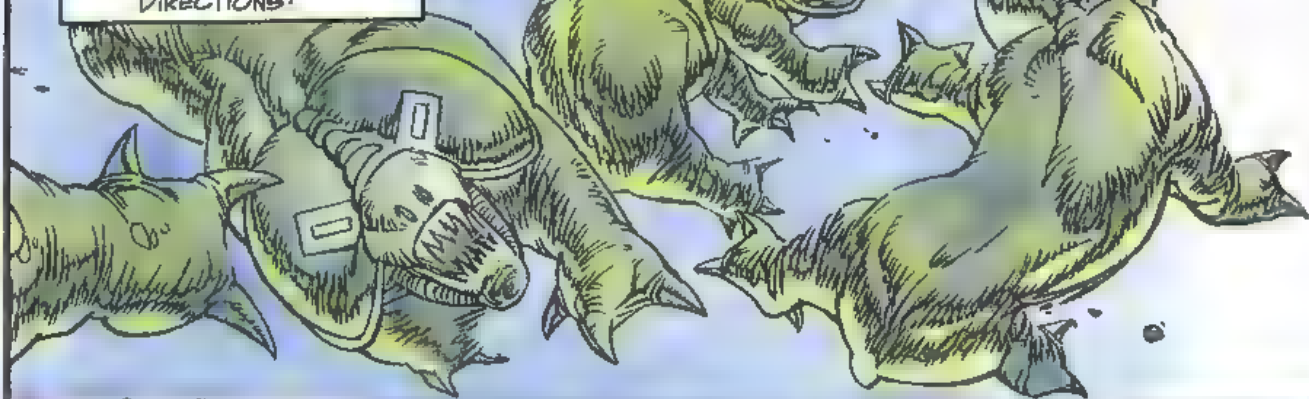
I DON'T KNOW, DEAR... I THINK I PREFER A BLASTER.

THAT WAY I KNOW THEY'RE NOT GOING TO GNAW OFF MY LEG WHEN MY BACK IS TURNED!

WITH UNEXPECTED SUDDENNESS
A GREAT AND TERRIBLE SOUND
RENDS THE AIR--

--AND THE BATTLE DOGS ARE
HURLED SHRIEKING IN ALL
DIRECTIONS!

RRROOOARRR

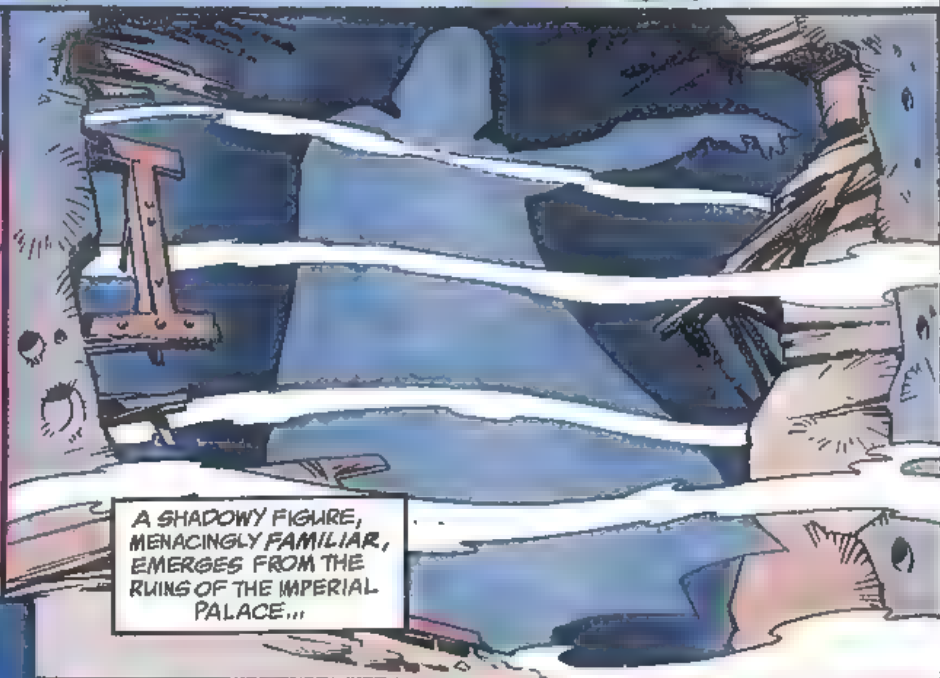


GOSH, LEIA--I APOLOGIZE!
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD--

IT WASN'T
ME, HAN--
LOOK!



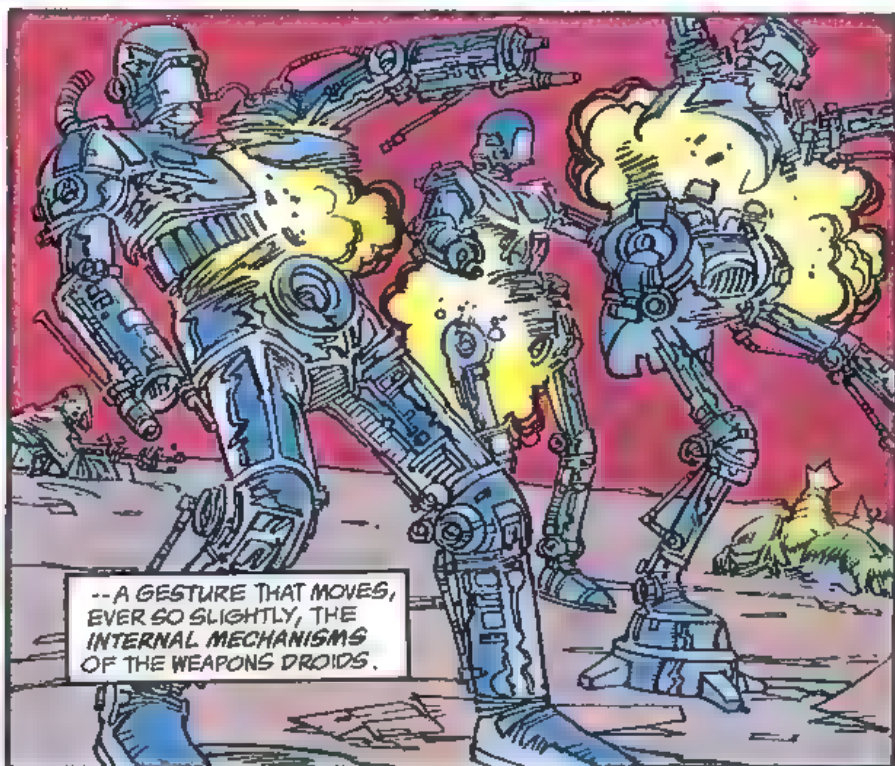
A SHADOWY FIGURE,
MENACINGLY FAMILIAR,
EMERGES FROM THE
RUINS OF THE IMPERIAL
PALACE...

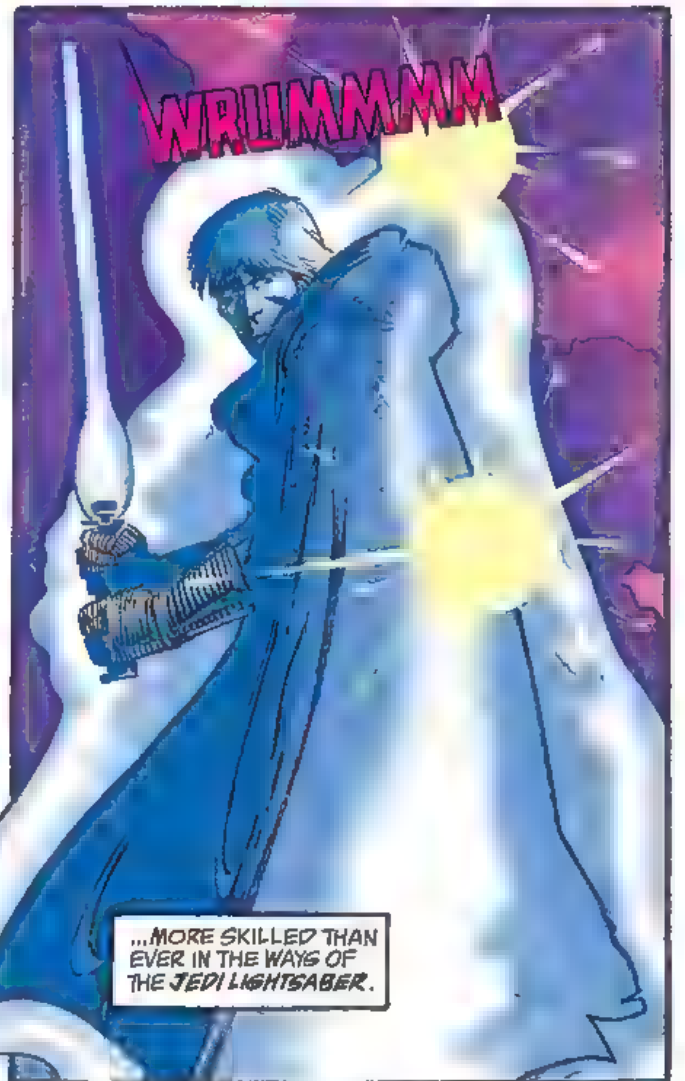
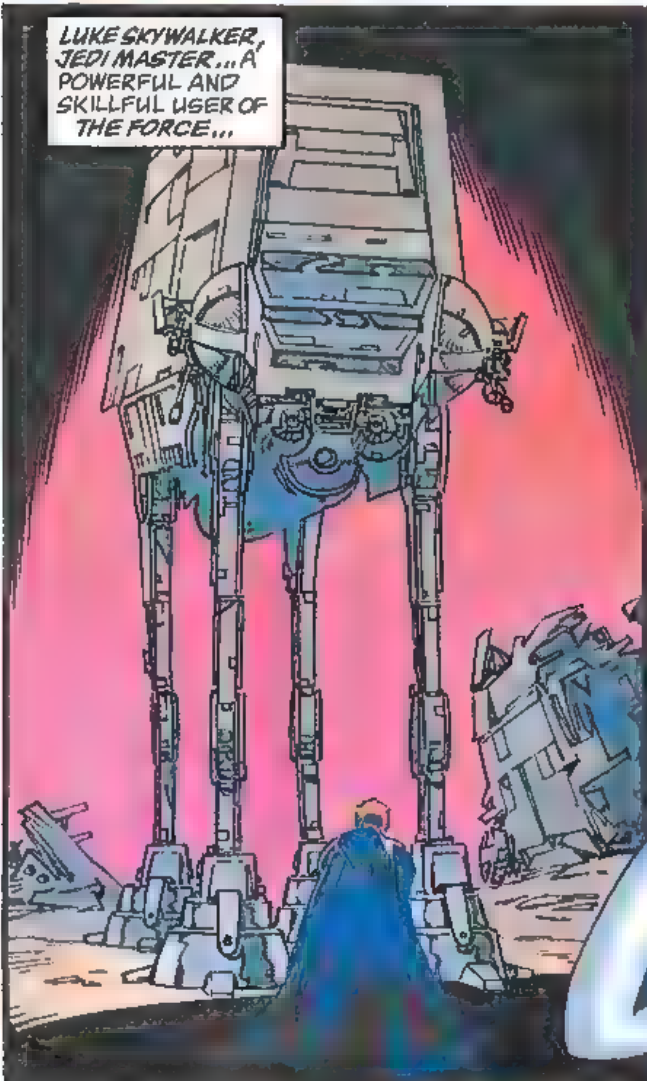


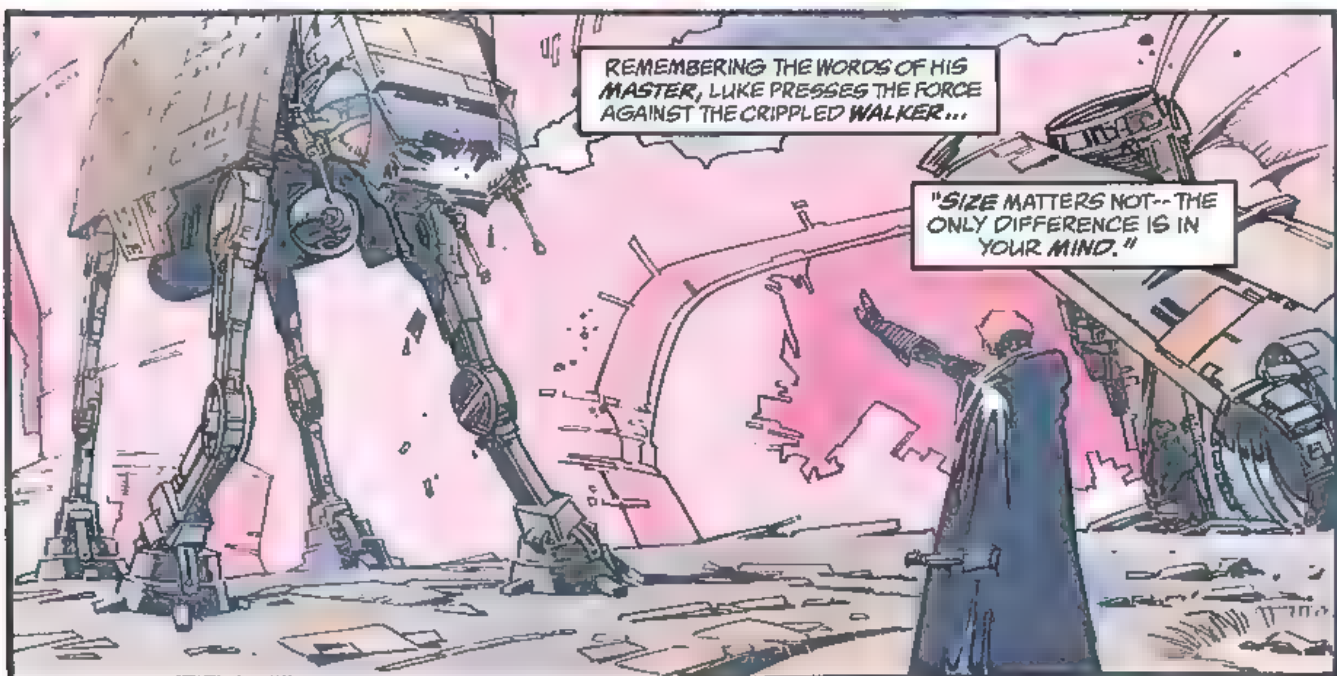
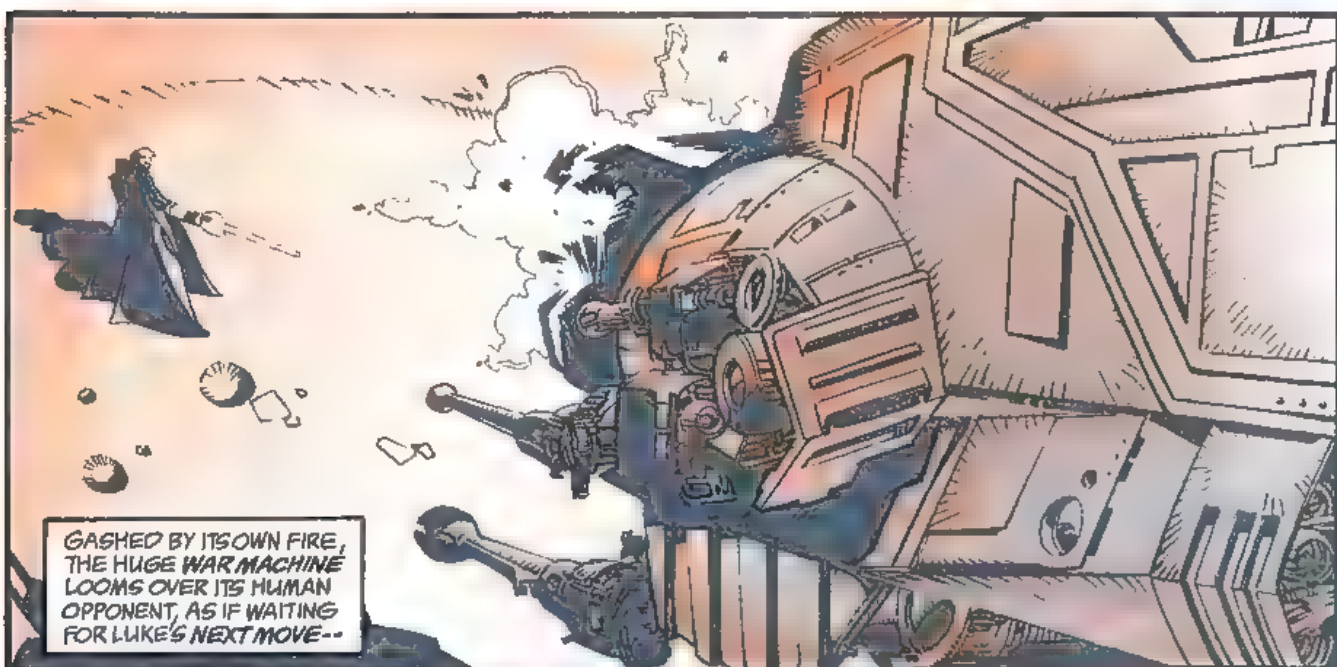
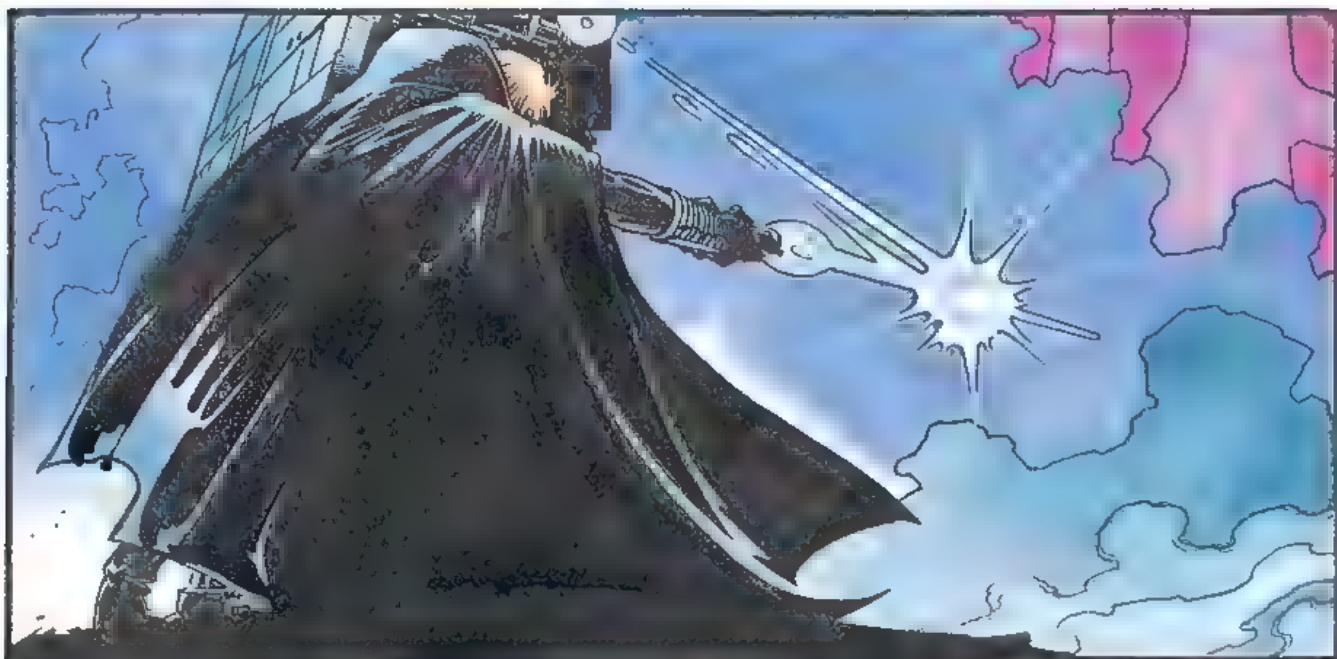
THE FIGURE GESTURES...
A SIMPLE GESTURE...
THE GESTURE OF A JEDI--



--A GESTURE THAT MOVES,
EVER SO SLIGHTLY, THE
INTERNAL MECHANISMS
OF THE WEAPONS DROIDS.







THE WALKER FALLS.



AND THEN...THE REUNION OF
BROTHER AND SISTER...AND
FRIENDS WHO HAVE FOUGHT
THIS LONG WAR FOR FREEDOM...

WHRR-TIK ... BEE-BOOP!

YES, ARTOO, THIS
IS QUITE AN EMOTIONAL
MOMENT...

MY
PROTOCOL
EMPATHY MODULE
IS STARTING TO
OVERHEAT!



THERE'S A LOOK IN
SKYWALKER'S EYES...
A LOOK HIS SISTER
HAS NOT SEEN
BEFORE--



LUKE...
WHAT'S
WRONG?



I FOUND STRANGE
CLUES IN THE PALACE...
I HAVE TO STAY HERE,
LEIA...

BUT YOU... AND HAN...
CHEWIE... LANDO... SHOULD
LEAVE THIS PLACE AT
ONCE!

ARE YOU KIDDING? WE TRAVELED
A MILLION LIGHT YEARS TO GET YOU
OUT OF TROUBLE... AND YOU WANT
TO STAY HERE?



HAN... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
THERE'S A GREAT DISTURBANCE
IN THE FORCE... SOMEONE...
OR SOMETHING... IS USING
THE DARK SIDE OF THE
FORCE WITH UNBELIEVABLE
POWER!



I'VE FELT IT...
I'VE SEEN IT--

BUT YOU KNOW WE CAN'T
LEAVE YOU. I WON'T LET YOU
FACE... WHATEVER IT IS...
BY YOURSELF!



WHATEVER THIS THING IS,
WE'LL BE RIGHT BESIDE YOU,
KID-- BLASTERS BLAZING!



HAN, THIS ISN'T
JUST ANOTHER GUN BATTLE...
A VAST EVIL IS APPROACHING...
IT KNOWS I'M HERE.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN
IS UNAVOIDABLE... IT IS
MY DESTINY.

IT IS
BEGINNING
NOW... OUT THERE
SOMEWHERE.



"IT'S COMING OUT
OF HYPERSPACE..."

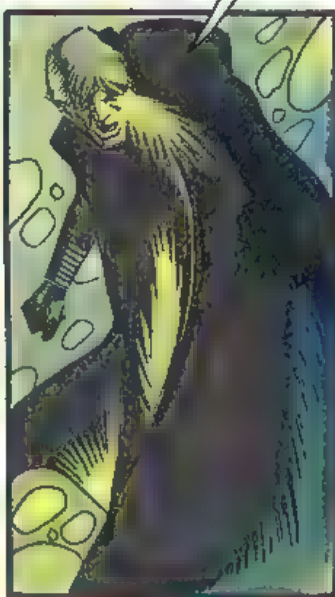
TSEB
NLEL
WHUH!

ON BOARD THE ANTARES SIX,
CAPTAIN SNUNB AND HIS CREW
BEHOLD AN AWESOME SIGHT--

--A HYPERSPACE WORMHOLE
HAS OPENED IN THE NIGHT... AND
A MIGHTY ENERGY STORM EMERGES!

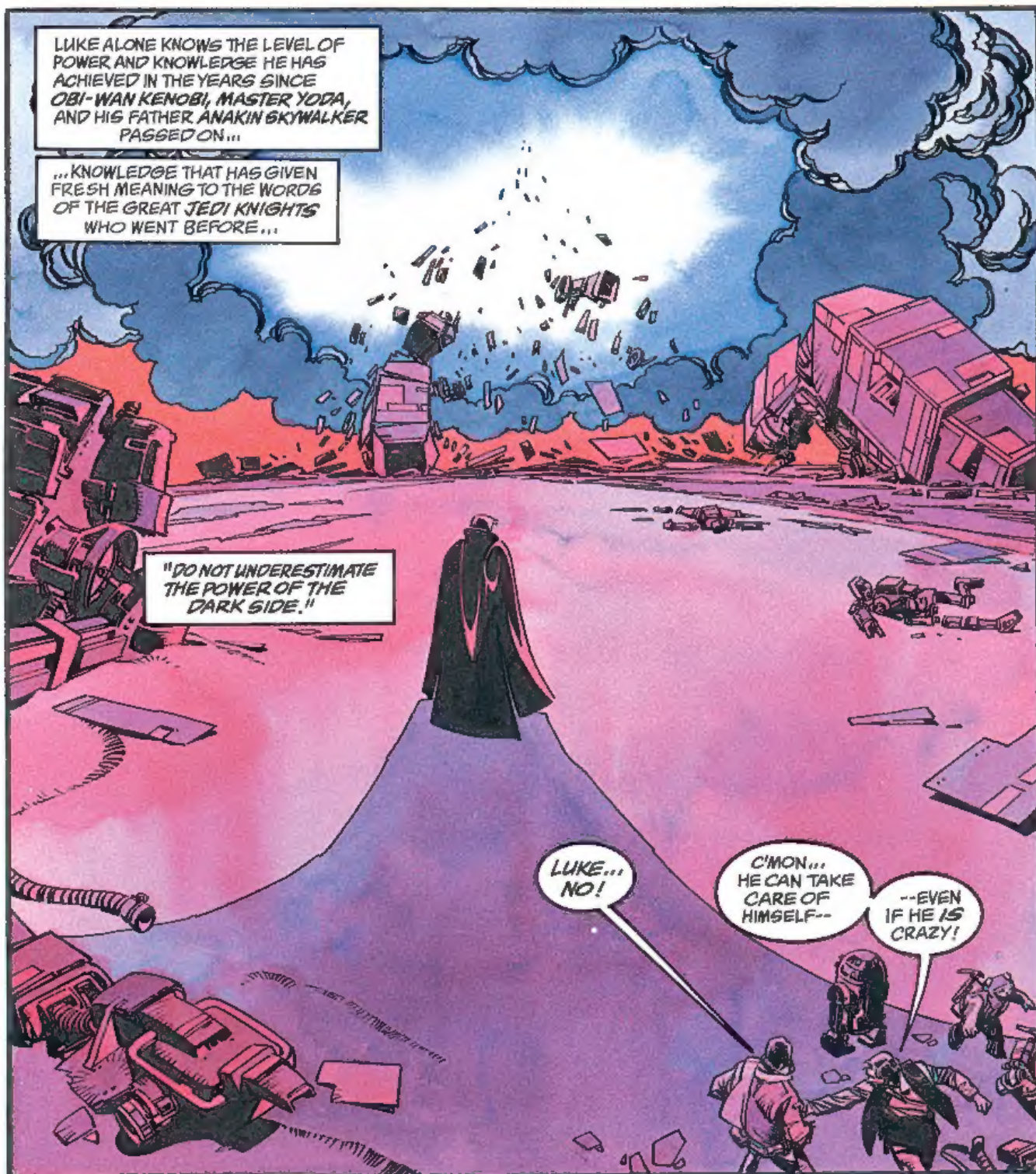
WITH RUMBLING CHAOTIC FURY,
THE STORM SWEEPS DOWN ACROSS
THE PLANET'S SURFACE!

IT'S ALMOST
UPON US! THERE'S
NO NEED FOR YOU
TO DIE TOO!



IT DOESN'T
WANT YOU... IT
WANTS ME!

LEAVE! ALL
OF YOU! OR YOU'LL BE
DESTROYED!





ARTOO! OH,
NO! HE THINKS HE
BELONGS WITH MASTER
LUKE!

STOP HIM,
SOMEONE...
PLEASE!

NO TIME... LUKE
WILL HAVE TO SAVE
ARTOO... WHILE HE'S
BUSY SAVING
HIMSELF!

GET
ON BOARD,
THREEPIO!

LUKE ALONE KNOWS THAT HIS
VERY PRESENCE ON THIS
WORLD HAS TRIGGERED A
RESPONSE OF SUCH HATRED
THAT IT RENDS THE FABRIC OF
SPACE ITSELF!

MOVED BY THE POWER AND
URGENCY IN LUKE'S COMMAND,
THE HEROES OF THE ALLIANCE
FEEL NO CHOICE BUT TO
ABANDON THEIR FRIEND TO
HIS FATE--

B-BLEEP?

AND ACROSS THE VAST DEEPS
OF SPACE, TWO MASTERS OF
POWER TOUCH *MINDS*... ONE
THE VERY ESSENCE OF A JEDI...
THE OTHER DARK BEYOND DARKNESS.

